



Columbia Fire Department

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January 18, 2019

Mr. Gilbert Walker
Executive Director, Columbia Housing Authority
1917 Harden St.
Columbia, SC 29204

Dear Mr. Walker:

A comprehensive fire and life safety inspection was conducted in twenty-six buildings at Allen-Benedict Court, 1810 Court Plaza, Columbia, SC 29204, by the Columbia-Richland Fire Department Hazardous Material Team, Fire Prevention Division, and the Columbia Police Department Property Maintenance Division. In addition, a community risk assessment was conducted of the entire facility by Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins, Police Chief William "Skip" Holbrook, and Fire Marshal George Adams Jr. Community risk reduction is designed to manage those associated risks within our community by assessing and prioritizing risks that have been identified. During this inspection, the following violations and or risks were identified:

Fire Code

- A presence of natural gas, which is unsafe and a severe risk for the community and the occupants.
- Strong odor of a petroleum scent and other pungent odor.
- Carbon monoxide detected in several units which is severe and lethal.
- Several smoke alarms were missing from multiple units.
- Several smoke alarms when tested did not activate.
- Several smoke alarms are outdated. (Life-span is 10 years)
- All occupancy (residential) shall be equipped with carbon monoxide detectors. Missing in all 244 units.
- Several fire extinguishers are out of date and have not been serviced since 2016.
- Inside closet area appeared to be charred in several units.
- Exposed wires on ceiling where smoke alarms were installed.

Property Maintenance

- Several units infested with roaches and possible bed bugs.
- All gas stoves shall be disassembled for cleaning.
- Sufficient evidence of several stoves leaking gas.
- Several stoves were outdated.
- Several units have damaged ceiling surface.
- High volume of rodent droppings, and cobwebs on household items.
- Clutter and hoarding leading to sanitation problems in several units.
- Every habitable space shall have at least one openable window.

- All gas cooking appliances, water heating appliances, and heating appliances shall be properly installed and maintained in a safe working condition.

Due to the severity of the noted deficiencies, it has been determined that all buildings at this location are unsafe. The conditions as outlined at Allen-Benedict Court constitute a clear and imminent threat to human life, safety or health in accordance with the International Fire Code section 110.1 and the Property Maintenance Code section 109.1 Therefore, this facility shall be immediately evacuated and all hazardous conditions shall be abated. During the inspection process, there were 63 apartments with carbon monoxide or natural gas detected, 411 individuals evacuated, and 17 pets evacuated. However, the most significant violations were the presences in all 26 buildings, of natural gas and carbon monoxide which shall be abated by a third party. In addition, city service providers will conduct a follow up inspection and risk assessment to determine if all violations have been abated prior to re-occupying this facility.

Finally, we will continue to encourage the Columbia Housing Authority to work with their tenants and staff to promote fire safety and proper maintenance in every property associated with the housing authority.

Respectfully,

Aubrey D. Jenkins

Aubrey D. Jenkins
Fire Chief

cc: City Manager Teresa Wilson
Police Chief William "Skip" Holbrook